

What is claimed is:

1. A hopper for a laundry machine having a rotating drum, said hopper comprising: front, lower, and side walls which cooperatively define a structure having closed bottom and side surfaces, an open rear surface for being disposed in communication with the interior of said drum, and an upper hopper opening for receiving therethrough items for introduction into said drum; and

a splash shutter disposed above said hopper opening, said shutter movable between an open position wherein said hopper opening is exposed for receiving said items therethrough, and a closed position wherein said hopper opening is covered for retaining the contents of said laundry machine.

2. The hopper of claim 1 wherein said shutter comprises a plurality of interlocked parallel slats.

3. The hopper of claim 2 wherein said slats are captured in a pair of opposed, spaced-apart end cap tracks carried on the tops of said side walls.

4. The hopper of claim 3 further comprising:

a tube connected to a first end of said shutter, wherein said slats are rolled onto said tube when said shutter is in a closed position; and means for rotating said tube.

5. The hopper of claim 4 further comprising a cord connected to said tube, said cord being routed through at least one pulley and connected to a second end of said shutter opposite said first end, so as to maintain tension on said slats while said shutter is opened and closed.

6. The hopper of claim 1 wherein said side walls are generally planar and disposed in spaced-apart relationship, said front wall is generally planar and connected to said side walls, and said lower wall is arcuate and connected to said side walls and said front wall.

7. The hopper of claim 6 further including an observation window disposed in one of said walls.

8. A laundry machine comprising:

a frame;

a drum rotatably supported in said frame, said drum having an opening for receiving items to be processed;

a hopper disposed in communication with said opening; said hopper comprising:

front, lower, and side walls which cooperatively define a structure having closed bottom and side surfaces, an open rear surface for being disposed in communication with the interior of said drum, and an upper hopper opening for receiving therethrough items for introduction into said drum; and

a splash shutter disposed above said hopper opening, said shutter movable between an open position wherein said hopper opening is exposed for receiving said items therethrough, and a closed position wherein said hopper opening is covered for retaining the contents of said laundry machine.

9. The laundry machine of claim 8 wherein said shutter comprises a plurality of interlocked parallel slats.

10. The laundry machine of claim 9 wherein said slats are captured in a pair of opposed, spaced-apart end cap tracks carried on the tops of said side walls.

11. The laundry machine of claim 10 further comprising:  
a tube connected to a first end of said shutter, wherein said slats are rolled onto said tube when said shutter is in a closed position; and  
means for rotating said tube.

12. The laundry machine of claim 11 further comprising a cord connected to said tube, said cord being routed through at least one pulley and connected to a second end of said shutter opposite said first end, so as to maintain tension on said slats while said shutter is opened and closed.

13. The laundry machine of claim 8 wherein said side walls are generally planar and disposed in spaced-apart relationship, said front wall is generally planar and connected to said side walls, and said lower wall is arcuate and connected to said side walls and said front wall.

14. The laundry machine of claim 13 further including an observation window disposed in one of said walls.